



**Clint Peterson**  
McPherson County

"Because I live four miles east of McPherson, I am too far out for the DSL available in town. Along with farming, I also operate a crop consulting business out of my home, which requires rapid access to the Internet. Any help would be appreciated."



## WHAT'S INSIDE

A Level Playing Field ..... 2

Impact of Broadband on Rural Communities..... 3

## THE KANSAS FARM BUREAU AND CONNECTED NATION

Thanks to a new public-private collaborative effort, Kansas has begun a detailed statewide broadband mapping process that will greatly benefit life opportunities in rural Kansas.



Connected Nation, a national non-profit organization that facilitates public-private partnerships to increase access and use of broadband, has partnered with the Kansas Farm Bureau and the Information Network of Kansas to begin mapping broadband availability in Kansas. This mapping initiative will help identify where gaps in broadband Internet service exist – right down to the street or farm road level.

Along with the mapping, the partnership will help stimulate demand on the grassroots level, which will translate into economic and community development, better education, higher quality health care, more efficient public safety, and improved quality of life.



# A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

When it comes to the future viability of rural life in Kansas, I can't think of a more important area of work than bringing high-speed broadband Internet access to the state.



In nearly every respect, introducing broadband Internet service to rural areas of Kansas is akin to rural electrification in the early part of the twentieth century. That technology changed life on the farm, and broadband Internet access will be the same.

Every day, more and more real-time, bottom-line business is conducted online, impacting those who have made a conscious decision to build their lives and raise their families in rural Kansas. Farmers and ranchers are like any other businesspeople. We buy and sell equipment over the Internet, market our products, keep up to speed on new trends, and research the products we use.

The demographic trends in rural Kansas are not encouraging. Online opportunities in business, education, and health care can have a dramatic impact on whether our talented young people stay or leave home. If these opportunities are not available, what's the incentive for them to stay?

As our society transitions further and further away from the personal connection with rural life, perceptions and opinions that are not always accurate are formed. We want to join in the global community conversation to share our story about the good work we do and the value we derive from our decision to live and work in rural Kansas.

We live in the information age. Effective access is essential. Every aspect of life in rural Kansas can be improved with broadband access.

We need a level playing field.

*Steve Baccus is a fourth-generation grain farmer in Ottawa County and president of Kansas Farm Bureau, the state's leading agriculture advocacy organization.*



**Brenda Dooley**  
**Jewell County**

"What we do on the Internet is very limited because of the time it takes to download on dial-up. It's not unusual at all for farm families trying to do business online to load up their work at bedtime and hope for the best by the time they get up in the morning."



**Alisa Rath**  
**Cheyenne County**

"In today's world, where everything is electronically driven, everyone should be allowed the same opportunity for coverage, regardless of how remote their location. As more and more work opportunities move away from the traditional 9 to 5 office role, we need to be allowed to access our computer network like everyone else. We deserve the same advantages."

# IMPACT OF BROADBAND ON RURAL COMMUNITIES

As Kansas begins its work for widespread broadband availability, Connected Nation's "Consumer Insights to America's Broadband Challenge" – a research report that surveyed more than 50,000 consumers in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee, where Connected Nation is active – is a helpful resource. The report outlined the major barriers of broadband adoption, particularly in rural areas.

Consider these statistics:

- The largest barrier to broadband adoption is a lack of awareness about broadband's benefits. Forty-four percent of those with no home broadband connection say they don't need it.
- Similarly, the top barrier to computer ownership is a perceived lack of need. Sixty-two percent of those who do not own a computer say they don't need one.
- Twenty-four percent of those who do not own a computer cite the initial cost as a barrier. Likewise, nearly 25 percent of those without a home broadband connection say broadband is too expensive.
- Forty percent of parents with children who are without a home computer see no need for having a computer in the home. And 30 percent of parents with children in the home who do not have a home broadband connection see no need for a broadband connection.
- More than one-half (56%) of people with disabilities who do not own a computer see no need for having a computer in the home. Four out of ten people with disabilities who do not have a home broadband connection see no need for a broadband connection.
- Forty-two percent of rural residents without a home broadband connection say it is because they do not need broadband. This compares with 19 percent of these rural residents who say they do not subscribe because broadband service is unavailable in their area. Twenty-two percent of these rural residents say broadband is too expensive.

With broadband mapping, Kansas will be on its way to helping combat these adoption barriers. Take, for example, the impact broadband mapping and demand stimulation

has had in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee.

- Since the 2002 inception of Connect Kentucky, approximately 1.3 million additional Kentucky residents now have broadband access. Subscriptions to broadband have increased 100 percent, and broadband availability has increased from 60 percent to 95 percent.
- In Ohio, from 2008 to 2009, broadband adoption jumped from 55 percent to 62 percent. Across Ohio, 95 percent of households now have broadband service available. This figure is up from 92 percent in 2008.
- In Tennessee, between July 2007 and January 2008, Tennessee's broadband adoption rate grew significantly faster, some 16 percent, than the national average of 8 percent during the same time period. The areas in Tennessee that showed the most impressive spike in broadband adoption were the rural counties—which saw a 37 percent increase in broadband adoption.



**Matt Perrier**  
**Greenwood County**

"I recently accessed Oprah's website to comment on a beef issue. It was my first and last time blogging because with dial-up Internet it took me an hour-and-a-half before I even got where I needed to be. Then, my dial-up crashed, and I was out of luck."